

Read On...

SPRING 2002

Official Publication of the Maricopa County Library District

DISCOVER YOUR LIBRARY!

Author, Author!

An Exclusive Interview with Lois Lowry

Lois Lowry has twice won the prestigious Newbery Medal for Young Adult Fiction.

Lowry was a featured speaker at the Arizona Book Festival on April 6 and signed books in the Library District's booth. The Library District hosted Lowry's appearance and cosponsored the festival.



RO (Read On): What do like best about visiting Arizona?

LL (Lois Lowry): Ho ho ho. What a silly question to ask someone from Boston in January. As I write this answer, I am looking out at snow covering my yard, and am feeling nervous about an upcoming trip this weekend because of the prediction of more snow and bad driving conditions. All things considered, I would much rather be in Arizona this month. April though? That's another story. April is when New England is just beginning to hint at spring, and I will be eyeing my garden - maybe through the last remaining snow - to see if my tulip bulbs are starting to come up.

RO: *Number the Stars* was your first book that did not have a contemporary setting. What inspired this different direction, and would you ever do historical fiction again?

LL: It was my Danish friend, Annelise Platt, who told me the story

of her childhood, and the real history of her country during World War II, who inspired me to find a way to tell it to children. It's an important story, I think - the integrity and the honor involved - but it is also one that lends itself to the ingredients kids like in fiction: suspense, likable characters, an interesting setting and plot. When I went to do the necessary research, I found some details - like the cocaine-permeated handkerchief - that I could never have dreamed up. Sometimes truth really is stranger (and more fascinating) than fiction.

Would I do historical fiction again? Sure, if the right ingredients were there and spoke to me in the way that Annelise's story did. Right now, in fact, partly finished, in my computer, is a novel set in the early 20th century. I'm having a good time researching the details from that period of time and from that place (Pennsylvania). But it is not focussed on historic world events the way *Number the Stars* is; instead, it is character-driven, and centers on how people of that time and place would have reacted to events in their own small town.

RO: Your most recent book, *Gathering Blue*, speaks poignantly about (continued on page 2)

Maricopa County

LIBRARY DISTRICT
<http://mclld.maricopa.gov>

ONEBOOK.ONEMONTH.ONEGOAL.

What if Everyone in Arizona read the Same Book at the same time?



Barbara O'Hara, Adult Services Coordinator Maricopa County Library District

A few weeks after I started my new job as coordinator at the Library District, I was given an assignment to work with librarians "Valley-Wide" for a reading program for adults. What began as a Valley-wide project became a state-wide one once we started meeting, and we have taken off from there. The idea was to cre-



Barbara Kingsolver This program was led by the director of the Washington Center for the Book at the Seattle Public Library, who couldn't have predicted that four years later many other cities and states would follow. Four years later Chicago's "One Book, One City" was a great success, so much so that people asked for it to be held twice a year instead of annually. Seattle chose *A Lesson Before Dying*, and Chicago (continued on page 2)

(Lois Lowry continued from page 1)
the role of the artist in society, and suggests that an artist not only records, but can help change history. *The Giver* also addresses the need to preserve cultural memory. What kind of understanding of these issues would you hope a young person might get from reading either of these books?

LL: I think the central issue of both books is the vital importance of freedom. In both books, I used a young person - Jonas, in *The Giver* and Kira in *Gathering Blue* - with a particular gift (and in both cases I made the gift seem somewhat magical, to make the story more interesting) and without their being aware of it, their gifts are subverted to suit the needs of others. So both stories, really, are about young people acquiring insight, shedding restraints, freeing themselves to affect their worlds in positive ways. Without any magic or fantasy involved, this is something that every young person will do as they mature and gain wisdom and make choices.

RO: Is there anything you can tell us about books we may see in the future?

LL: Well, the newest book - soon to be published - is aimed at a younger audience, and is set entirely in a second grade classroom where both the students and teacher are deeply - and humorously - affected by an unusual student. Here are the opening paragraphs:

There was a new student in the Watertown Elementary School. She arrived in October, after the first month of school had already passed. She opened the second grade classroom door at ten o'clock on a Wednesday morning and appeared there all alone, without even a mother to introduce her. She was wearing pajamas and cowboy boots and was holding a dictionary and a lunch box.

"Hello," Mrs. Pidgeon, the second grade teacher, said. "We're in the middle of our spelling lesson."

"Good," said the girl in pajamas. "I brought my dictionary. Where's my desk?"

"Who are you?" Mrs. Pidgeon asked politely.

"I'm your new student. My name is Gooney Bird Greene, that's Greene with a silent 'e' at the end, and I just moved here from China. I want a desk right smack in the middle of the room, because I like to be right smack in the middle of everything."

Not surprisingly, the book is to be called by her name: *Gooney Bird Greene*. And I have other books in the works as well...the one set in the early 1900s, which I've mentioned, for example. I have not gotten tired of either Anastasia or her brother, Sam. And I plan on a book which will link *The Giver* and *Gathering Blue* to create and complete a trilogy. So many projects - so little time!

"...They are affecting the lives and futures of tomorrow's adults in very profound ways..."

RO: Why should adults be interested in reading children's books?

LL: Maybe because so many contemporary children's books are beautifully, and in some cases brilliantly, written. Maybe because they are affecting the lives and futures of tomorrow's adults in very profound ways. You know, there are a number of wonderful, in some cases classic, books that were published "for adults": *The Yearling*, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, *To a Kill Mockingbird*, *Catcher in the Rye* and others... which, had they been written this year or last year, would have been published in the "YA" (young adult) category, which did not exist when those books came out. ■

(ONEBOOKAZ continued from page 1)
To Kill a Mockingbird and here in Arizona, we have chosen *Animal Dreams* by Barbara Kingsolver.

Kingsolver has lived in Tucson over 20 years now. She moved from Kentucky when she was a young woman, was schooled as a biologist, became a science writer then a journalist. As a journalist she made a trip to Clifton-Morenci, Arizona, to write about the mining strike that took place there in 1983. Her book, *Holding the Line*, is about the women of Clifton-Morenci, who held the line for their miner husbands while they looked for work elsewhere. Since writing this nonfiction book, Kingsolver has written four novels, a book of essays, short stories, and edited a book of poetry. She considers her writing a form of political activism and has spoken up for human rights and environmental rights. Her book, *The Poisonwood Bible*, has received international recognition, and, as a consequence, her books have been translated into many other languages.

Kingsolver has said of *Animal Dreams* that she was thinking about "why some people engage courageously with the world's problems, while others simply withdraw." The plot revolves around two sisters who make very different choices in their lives. Another concern this novel grapples with is, "How important is it for each of us to find our own sense of belonging?" In this "migratory" state of Arizona, this is a very important question. Most Arizonans came here from other places. What does this do to our own regional psychology? How can we build community here? One way is to join all of Arizona in reading *Animal Dreams* this April. Reserve a copy at the Library District, come to the book discussions and programs, and talk about this fascinating book. ■

ONEBOOKAZ

Join us for Any or All of the Library District's *Animal Dreams* Activities!

April 2 (Tuesday) 2-4 pm Book Discussion and Arizona Art and Nature
Southwestern artists, Barbara Natoli and Barbara Ann Spencer Jump will discuss their work, and comment on *Animal Dreams* and the role of art, nature, and literature in Arizona life. Natoli's work will display at the library April 1-15. **Southeast Regional Library**, Conference Room A 480.539.5136 775 N. Greenfield Rd., Gilbert

April 8 (Monday) 7-8:30 pm North Central Regional Library Book Discussion
602.506.6352 17811 N. 32nd Street, Phoenix

April 10 (Wednesday) READING RELAY! Imagine ONE book being read by many voices at the same time all over the state. That's exactly what will happen during the Reading Relay. These are the Library District's Reading Relay times and locations:



- | | | |
|-----------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| 10 am | Southeast Regional Library | 480.539.5136 |
| | 775 N. Greenfield Rd., Gilbert | |
| 10:30 am | Highland High School | 480.813.0051 |
| | 4301 E. Guadalupe Rd., Gilbert | |
| 11 am | Coffee Plantation | 480.497.6690 |
| | 1555 N. Gilbert Rd., Gilbert | |
| 11 am | Gilbert Senior Center Reading Relay AND Book Discussion | 480.892.9898 100 N. Oak St., Gilbert |
| 11:45 am | Hot Java Mama's | 480.503.8870 |
| | 53 N. Val Vista Dr., Gilbert | |
| 2 pm | Gilbert Chamber of Commerce | 480.892.0056 |
| | 202 N. Gilbert Rd., Gilbert | |
| 2 pm | Gilbert Town Municipal Center | 480.503.6000 |
| | 1025 S. Gilbert Rd., Gilbert | |

April 11 (Thursday) 2-3 pm Fountain Hills Branch Dream Interpretation
Join psychologist Susan Schwartz for this workshop. Her remarks will revolve around *Animal Dreams*, and explore how psychology and literature can reveal the meaning of dreams and how to interpret dream symbols.

April 12 (Friday) 5 pm Aguila Branch Library Book Discussion
928.685.2214 50023 N. 514th Ave., Aguila

April 17 (Wednesday) 11 am Guadalupe Branch Library Book Discussion
480.831.5967 9241 S. Avenida del Yaqui, Guadalupe

April 18 (Thursday) 7 pm Queen Creek Branch Book Discussion
480.987.3600 (Queen Creek Town Hall) 22350 W. Ellsworth, Queen Creek

April 24 (Wednesday) 5 pm El Mirage Branch Book Discussion
623.583.1030 14010 N. El Mirage Rd., El Mirage

April 25 (Thursday) 2-4 pm Fountain Hills Branch Library Book Discussion
480.837.9793 ext 207 12901 N. La Montana Dr., Fountain Hills

April 29 (Monday) 6-7 pm Gila Bend Branch Library Book Discussion
928.683.2061 202 N. Euclid, Gila Bend

April 30 (Tuesday) 7-8:30pm Southeast Regional Library Book Discussion
480.539.5136 775 N. Greenfield Rd., Gilbert
Even if you don't attend a discussion group call & let us know you're reading
Animal Dreams: 602.364.2934 or 1.866.212.6651

For Information on more ONEBOOKAZ events, visit our web site:
<http://mclid.maricopa.gov>

Tim's Choice

Tim Wadham, Youth Services Coordinator for the Maricopa County Library District, has been named one of three judges who will select this year's winners of the coveted **Boston Globe-Horn Book Awards**.

Selecting winners for National Literature Awards is becoming a habit for Wadham.

In the upcoming year, the Youth Services Coordinator will chair the **John Cotton Dana Library Public Relations Award**.

He recently served on the **Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in children's Video**, selecting the outstanding American video released during the previous year.

In 1998, Wadham served as a panelist on the **John Newbery Medal Committee**, the prestigious award presented every year for the best children's book published in the United States.

TIM'S TOP SIX RECOMMENDED CHILDREN'S BOOKS

- ☆ *The Giver* by Lois Lowry
- ☆ *The Dark is Rising* by Susan Cooper
- ☆ *Seven Daughters and Seven Sons* by Barbara Cohen and Bahija Lovejoy
- ☆ *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* by Avi
- ☆ *The Phantom Tollbooth* by Norton Juster
- ☆ *A Barrel of Laughs, A Vale of Tears* by Jules Feiffer

Life Along the Borders

Observations in the Wake of September 11

Dan Shilling,
*Executive
Director of
the Arizona
Humanities
Council*



Ever since the Arizona Humanities Council (AHC) embarked on a statewide series of conversations, mostly in libraries, about the historical, religious, and political background of the September 11 attacks, I've noticed how rancorous our discussions about the politics of identity can be. Not that there is anything new in this; it's just that the occasion tends to heighten one's awareness of it. Nowhere is that tension more visible than in the signs, symbols, and metaphors we use to describe the American character.

The early twentieth-century "melting pot" metaphor has been under attack for years from groups who wish to maintain their cultural identity. Many see the image of a melting pot as one that blends us all into an unsatisfying sameness—leveling difference and destroying tradition in name of the "common good."

Others have suggested that the "mosaic" metaphor is more appropriate, for in this image the diverse parts complete the whole, but each part is allowed to maintain its unique identity. This metaphor might work, it seems, if we focus our attention as much on that which makes the mosaic possible—the glue that connects the constituent parts—as well as on the parts themselves.

Without the glue, we have, as Harvard philosopher Cornel West writes, "a Balkanized society of proliferating identities that invites Bosnia." With the glue, we have a whole.

Unfortunately, much of contemporary identity focuses more on the nature of separate mosaic parts than the glue, a problem Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr. identifies when he notes that our emphasis "is about the priority of difference, and while it is not by itself, undesirable, it is by itself, dangerously inadequate."

In effect, Gates and others argue that we must move beyond describing only the centers of the mosaic pieces—to the borders where they meet, and to the glue that binds the borders.

Life along the borders can be meaningful. As folklorist Jay Mechling writes, "We find more meaning-making at the borders, as people meet and attempt to communicate the meanings of their own lives and to understand the lives of others." It's this meaning-making at the borders that drives a lot of our programming at AHC.

But life along the borders can be messy. What is the American character? That is, what is the composition of the glue that holds together America's diverse communities? Sociologist Amatai Etzioni, a leading spokesperson for the communitarian movement, responds that one of the basic tenets that defines the American character, regardless of ethnicity, is our tolerance of "the other," a principle embedded in our Constitution.

But what if "the other" itself is not tolerant (and we're certainly testing that today in Afghanistan)?

That is the challenge presented to us by the messianic hatred of the Taliban, as well as Rabbi Yaacov Perrin, who said in his eulogy for Baruch Goldstein (the man who murdered worshipping Palestinians in Hebron), "One million Arabs are not worth a Jewish fingernail." Further, what about cultures which embrace practices anathema to the American ideal, such as the subordination of women we hear about in much of the Muslim world?

How do we reconcile these pieces with the American mosaic? How can we feel part of the whole when other pieces do not seem to fit the pattern?

Life along the borders is also not easy, and there are no smooth answers to these troublesome questions. It seems, however, that if we focus our discussions on that which enables us to "identify with," then we may begin to uncover a purpose in our "whole" that is greater than, yet contributes to, the separate pieces.

AHC invites everyone to participate in these discussions. Go to our Web site at www.azhumanities.org and click on the September 11 icon for a list of free programs and other resources. ■

The Arizona Humanities Council Mission Statement
Founded in 1973, AHC is the state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, a federal agency.

The Arizona Humanities Council encourages people to share the stories of Arizona's vivid past and vibrant living cultures through public programs celebrating individual, communal, and cultural lives.

Barbara O'Hara
Adult Services Coordinator
Maricopa County
Library District

The Reading Habit

I'm in training for old age. On my morning drive into work, I'm listening to a Book-On-Tape, *Old Friends*, by Tracy Kidder. It's about a community of seniors in a nursing home, Linda Manor; Kidder based his nonfiction book on real interviews with residents there. The miles slide away, and though I'm focused on the road, I'm in this pleasant dream world with characters I've never seen, though I feel I know them intimately. There's Joe and his roommate Lou, there's Eleanor and Dora, Bob and Art. This is my time with them. Since I'm near the end of the book, I start to wonder what book I'm going to listen to next, and I wonder which librarian I'll ask to be on the lookout for a new one for me. This is no small matter, as it is reading (or listening to) books that helps me through my days, delights me, teaches me, and feeds my soul. This is the joy of working at a library; there are plenty of chances to feed the reading habit.

As a habit, even though reading can be addictive and addiction has a bad name, reading rates high in this society. True reading addicts will read almost anything, the back of cereal boxes, movie magazines, and even those with discriminating taste can be seen peering over the shoulder of someone reading the paper, eager for the sight of those squiggly lines on paper. Still, being a reader isn't something to hide. It's a habit to be proud of and to encourage. Unlike overeating, alcoholism, and smoking, there's no shame in reading in public. In fact, people do it all the time, and even create buildings, jobs, and industries to nurture it. Libraries, Librarians, and Workers in the Publishing Industry are intimately connected to this solitary act. Relationships are formed around reading: book clubs, romances, and liaisons with favorite librarians who want to help us feed



Barbara O'Hara surrounded by multiple copies of *Animal Dreams*, in readiness for ONEBOOKAZ

the habit.

As a librarian, I regularly "fed" my patrons' habits. An elderly patron, Molly, routinely came in to get her books on tape at my library. Her liveliness about the stories she was reading and her response to them kept her going. And me, too. When she talked about a book, her passion was so evident and so enraptured me that I wanted to experience it also. Once I gave her a book that captured me, *All Over but the Shoutin'*, by Ricky Bragg, a biography of his childhood and, especially, of his mother. I worried that she might object to the raw language, but she knew a good story when she heard one and she was thrilled.

Molly also confided to me that she met her husband through a book she was reading in the 1940's. My father and I were discussing the book we were reading, and a young man sitting

nearby heard us. He asked if he could join us, and walked me home after that. I was engaged at the time, but uncertain about going through with it. I ended up breaking up with my then current beau and marrying John. I never regretted it." It was their exploration of the ideas in the book that brought them together.

What is reading good for? Just about everything. There's no life problem that I have that I don't turn to a book for advice, as well as turning to a good friend. After all, it is only the whole range of human experiences that can be found through reading—how it feels to wake up with your spouse after you are newly married, how it feels to lose a parent, or a child, or experience your first kiss. It's all there. The great solace is that we are not alone in it, and never can be as long as we have books to turn to.

What would my life be without reading? I shudder to think about it. Some scholars and current thinkers tell us that reading is on the way out. Read Sven Birkerts with his well-reasoned argument in *The Gutenberg Elegies*. This is scary stuff. But also read, New Yorker Anna Quindlen's book, *How Reading Changed My Life*, for balance. Though Quindlen and Birkerts would be in agreement about the importance of reading in their lives, and essentially argue for the preservation of the book, they do it in such different ways.

My father gave me little advice growing up. But one thing he said I remember, "never let school get in the way of your reading." You can substitute "your job" for school and say the same thing to yourself. So, here's my advice about cultivating the reading habit:

Read often, read long, and read well. Read *Animal Dreams* by Barbara Kingsolver in April 2002, with everyone else (continued on page 6)

The Library is...

Howard B. Carron, Ph.D., Adult Services Librarian, Southeast Regional Library

The camera pans slowly as it dolly's in on rolling hills; main street with quaint little shops; the shiny engines of the fire department; the barber shop complete with a red, white and blue pole; city hall near a well-kept town square; the bank on the corner, lush green park with a bandstand tucked in one corner; the schoolhouse we all remember AND the library. (Located in a converted old mansion, a storefront collection or a venerable building with Ionic pillars, prominent steps, and a sculptured lion or two at the entrance). Welcome to Our Town!

Having a library means the community has arrived, has achieved legitimacy. It is an institution shared by the smallest child to the oldest senior citizen.

While the library changes architecturally as towns become small cities, communities expand geometrically, schools pop up like sunflowers, the library still interacts with its neighbors as a business, and its programs and collections can directly address the concerns of the neighborhood. The focus is on a central place for information, civic activity and services (many of which patrons may be unaware). We have Friends of the Library bookstores, literacy groups, preschool story hours, computer classes and services, book talks, discussions, meeting rooms and specialty programs, and, of course, books, periodicals, newspapers and professional staffs to assist in many ways.

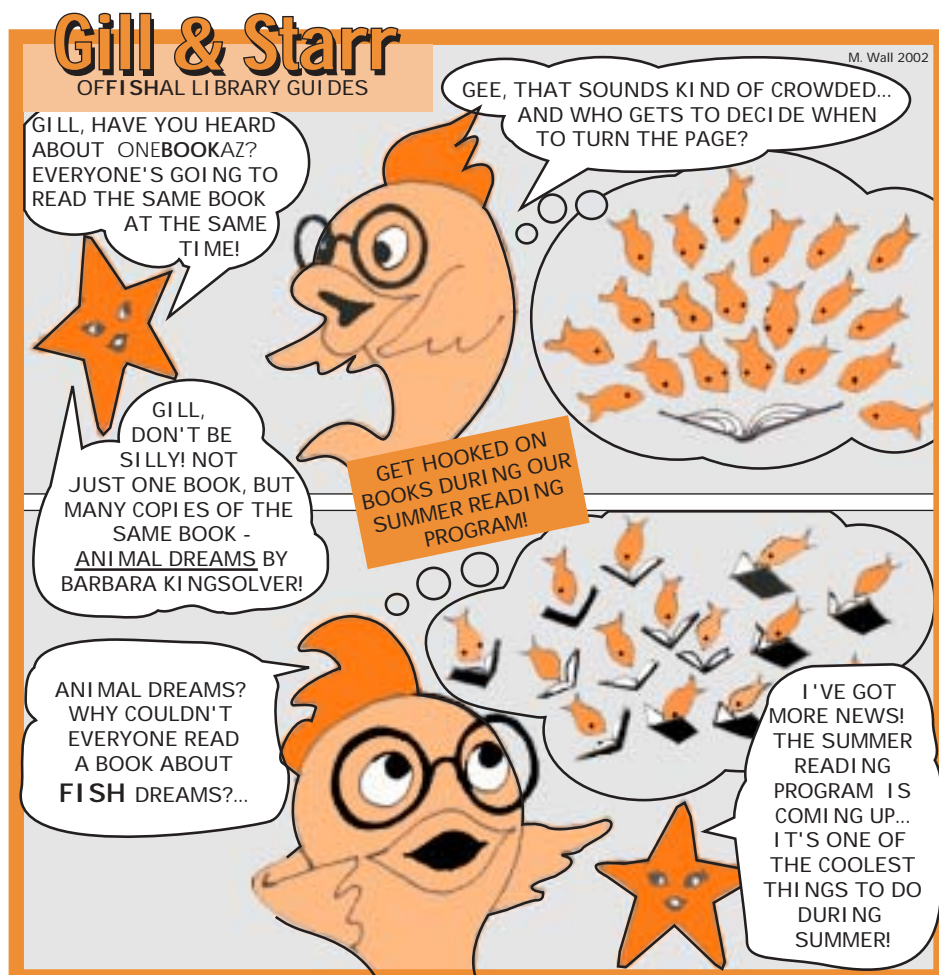
The dramatic changes in ethnic awareness and ethnic population are making significant impacts on our communities. The infusion of cultural mores quite different from traditional minorities challenge the library resulting in an endless variety of resources. The library is sensitive to the changing nature of the community as our rural communities evolve into suburbs.

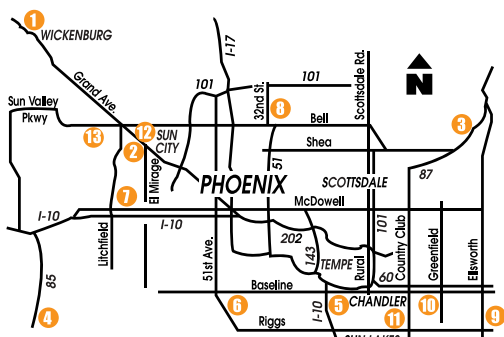
The library is a neutral place, a place where the colloidal suspension of different ideas, life-styles, education and economic levels can gather. We are apolitical. We are a place for meditation and mediation, a place of respite and reason in a sometimes-angry world. In the words of our musical icons, "We are the World." ■

(The Reading Habit continued from page 5) in Arizona as libraries all over the state promote the ONEBOOK AZ project, but of course, read in every other month too! Get to know your librarians. Make use of your library, the last holdout in a democratic society, a community gathering place for everyone, young and old, wealthy and poor alike. The library is the great equalizer, and we who are close to its inner workings, the ticking of the library clock, are fortunate indeed. For most of us, the reading habit just gets better with aging, like fine old wine. ■

"I'm of a fearsome mind to throw my arms around every living librarian who crosses my path, on behalf of the souls they never knew they saved."

Barbara Kingsolver





MARICOPA COUNTY LIBRARY DISTRICT LOCATIONS & MAP

- 1 Aguila Branch 928.685.2214**
50023 N. 514th Ave. Mon 10-7, Tues -Thurs 10-6, Fri 10-5
- 2 El Mirage Branch 623.583.1030**
14010 N. El Mirage Rd. Mon 10-7, Tues-Thurs 10-6, Fri 10-5
- 3 Fountain Hills Branch 480.837.9793**
12901 N. La Montana Dr. Mon-Thurs 9-9, Fri-Sat 9-5
Self-Check & SmartCard Library
- 4 Gila Bend Branch 928.683.2061**
202 N. Euclid Mon 10-7, Tues -Thurs 10-6, Fri 10-5
- 5 Guadalupe Branch 480.831.5967**
9241 S. Avenida del Yaqui
Mon 10-7, Tues -Thurs 10-6, Fri 10-5
- 6 Laveen Branch 602.237.2904**
9401 S. 51st Ave., P.O. Box 618, Laveen, AZ 8533
Mon 10-7, Tues -Thurs 10-6, Fri 10-5
- 7 Litchfield Park Branch 623.935.4118**
101 W. Wigwam Blvd.
Mon -Tues 9-7, Wed -Thurs 9-6, Fri-Sat 9-5
- 8 North Central Regional Library 602.506.2957**
17811 N. 32nd St., Phx
Mon-Thurs 9-9, Fri - Sat 9-6, Sun 1-5
Customer Service 602.506.4789
Friends Bookstore 602.506.5466 **A Self-Check Library**
- 9 Queen Creek Branch 480.987.3600**
22407 S. Ellsworth Mon-Wed 9-5, Thurs 10-7, Fri -Sat 9-5
- 10 Southeast Regional Library 480.539.5100**
775 N. Greenfield Rd., Gilbert
Mon-Thurs 9-9, Fri -Sat 9-6, Sun 1-5
Customer Service 480.539.5102
Friends Bookstore 480.539.5128 **A Self-Check Library**
- 11 Sun Lakes Branch Library, 480.895.5123**
10440 E. Riggs Rd., Suite 207 Mon-Fri 9-5
- 12 Surprise Branch Library 623.583.0626**
15844 N. Hollyhock Mon-Wed 9-5, Thurs 10-7, Fri -Sat 9-5
- 13 Northwest Regional Library (Opening Fall 2002)**
16089 N. Bullard, Surprise
Mon-Thurs 9-9, Fri -Sat 9-6, Sun 1-5
A Self-Check and SmartCard Library

Bookmobile/Outreach Services 602.506.4796 Mon-Fri 7-3:30
The bookmobile takes library materials to remote schools, retirement homes, preschools & under-served communities. Outreach provides Books-By-Mail for the homebound and visually impaired.



The Maricopa County Library District's mission is to provide access to a wealth of information and recreational resources for people of all ages and backgrounds so that they may have the opportunity to expand their horizons through reading and learning.

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Read On...Volume 2, Issue 1

**Read On...brings you more behind
the story @ your Library!™**

Editor: Audrey Brownell
Maricopa County Library District
17811 N. 32nd Street, Phoenix, AZ 85032
Phone: 602.506.5741
FAX: 602.506.4689
email: audreybrownell@mail.maricopa.gov

Graphic Design: Michele Wall

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- online at <http://mcl.d.maricopa.gov>
- hard copy at any Library District Branch
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